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GRS 370
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 FM PARIS 041746Z MAY 82
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 TELEGRAM NUMBER 419 OF 4 MAY 82

FALKLANDS : FRENCH POSITION

1. IN A RADIO INTERVIEW THIS MORNING (4 MAY) CHANDERNAGOR, THE MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MATTERS IN THE QUAI D'ORSAY, RECALLED THAT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE FALKLANDS CRISIS FRANCE HAD SAID THAT IT WAS INTOLERABLE FOR A COUNTRY TO TAKE THE LAW INTO ITS OWN HANDS AS ARGENTINA HAD DONE. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT DEEPLY REGRETTED THAT THE CRISIS SHOULD HAVE DEGENERATED INTO A WAR WITH VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED. NOTING THAT FRANCE HAD NEVER TAKEN UP A POSITION ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISPUTE BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND BRITAIN, CHANDERNAGOR SAID THAT "AN END MUST BE PUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT AND DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE RESUMED. THAT IS THE DIRECTION IN WHICH FRANCE WILL WORK".

CHANDERNAGOR RECALLED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NEGOTIATIONS GOING ON FOR A LONG TIME "WHICH COULD BE CONTINUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF SOME BODY OR OTHER, ESPECIALLY THE UNITED NATIONS". HE ADDED THAT FRANCE WOULD DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH BRITAIN BILATERALLY AND IN THE TEN.

2. THE QUAI SPOKESMAN IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE SINKING OF THE GENERAL BELGRANO AT THIS MORNING'S PRESS CONFERENCE SAID THAT "WE HAVE LEARNT OF THIS INCIDENT WITH CONSTERNATION". THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT THIS EXPRESSION OF CONSTERNATION STEMMED SOLELY FROM HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS AND DID NOT IMPLY ANY CHANGE IN THE FRENCH POSITION.

3. REPORTS OF THE DEATHS RESULTING FROM THE SINKING ARRIVED TOO LATE FOR THE MORNING PAPERS. EDITORIALS CONCENTRATE ON THE GENERAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MILITARY ESCALATION. LE FIGARO (RIGHT-WING) WHILE REAFFIRMING SUPPORT FOR BRITAIN'S ACTION ("MRS THATCHER WAS RIGHT NOT TO TOLERATE THE ATTACK ON THE UK'S SOVEREIGNTY AND TO MEET THE CHALLENGE WITH FIRMNESS AND PANACHE") AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S SOLIDARITY WITH BRITAIN, EXPRESSES CONCERN AT THE BENEFITS THE RUSSIANS ARE LIKELY TO REAP IN LATIN AMERICA.

/THE

THE LEFT-WING LIBERATION AND COMMUNIST HUMANITE CARRY HOSTILE EDITORIALS. WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS THE TONE OF REPORTING GENERALLY IS UNSYMPATHETIC; ATTENTION IS DRAWN FOR EXAMPLE TO THE GREAT AGE OF THE ARGENTINIAN CRUISER AND THE JINGOISTIC EXTREMES TO WHICH SECTIONS OF THE BRITISH PRESS ARE CONSIDERED TO HAVE GONE. WRITING IN THIS AFTERNOON'S LE MONDE, WHICH CARRIES REPORTS OF THE DEATHS OF MANY ARGENTINIAN SAILORS, THE PAPER'S LONDON CORRESPONDENT, VERNET, WONDERS IF THE SINKING OF THE GENERAL BELGRANO WAS NOT A BLUNDER.

FRETWELL

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FALKLAND ISLANDS

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